

## DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 441 785

SP 039 243

AUTHOR De Lawter, Kathryn; Sosin, Adrienne  
TITLE A Self-Study in Teacher Education: Collective Reflection as Negotiated Meaning.  
PUB DATE 2000-04-25  
NOTE 14p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New Orleans, LA, April 24-28, 2000).  
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)  
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.  
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; \*Global Approach; Graduate Students; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Multicultural Education; Preservice Teacher Education; Self Evaluation (Individuals); \*Teacher Collaboration; Teacher Educators  
IDENTIFIERS Meaning Construction; \*Reflective Thinking

## ABSTRACT

This self-study highlights two teacher educators' evolving collaborative relationship, viewed within the larger research study of their praxis in teaching. It is part of a multi-layered research methodology, developed to inquire into graduate preservice teachers' understandings of multicultural education. This paper focuses on the experience of negotiating meaning in a process called collective reflection. The term emerged as the teacher-researchers engaged in focused dialogue. It refers to self-conscious engagement with another for the purpose of mutual understanding, whether in class or with a research partner, and to the interaction between people who view being together as time to learn with and from each other. Collective reflection extends to the interpretive work of students and teachers within the classroom. It emphasizes the social nature of meaning construction and affirms the authentic expression of personal knowledge. In the context of a core course called Global Perspectives, collective reflection is a fundamental condition that must be created, made conscious, and maintained through types of interactions that sustain awareness of common purposes and respect for the integrity of differences. This self-study emphasizes concern for conscious and meaningful self and collective reflection in acts of curriculum making. (Contains 58 references.) (SM)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made  
from the original document.

**A SELF-STUDY IN TEACHER EDUCATION:  
COLLECTIVE REFLECTION AS NEGOTIATED MEANING**

Kathryn De Lawter & Adrienne "Andi" Sosin

Pace University, New York

Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, LA, April 25, 2000.

**Abstract**

This self-study is about two teacher educators' evolving collaborative relationship, viewed within the larger research study of their praxis in teaching. It is one layer of a multi-layered research methodology, developed in collegial partnership to inquire into graduate pre-service teacher education students' understandings of multicultural education. This paper focuses on the experience of negotiating meaning in a process called, "collective reflection." The term, collective reflection, emerged as the two teacher/researchers engaged in focused dialogues. The term refers to self-conscious engagement with "the other" for the purpose of mutual understanding whether in the classroom or with a research partner. It refers to the talk and interaction between people who view being together as time to learn with and from each other.

The concept of collective reflection extends to the interpretive work of the students and teacher within the classroom. Collective reflection emphasizes the social nature of meaning construction, and affirms the authentic expression of personal knowledge. In the context of a core course called Global Perspectives, collective reflection is a fundamental condition that must be created, made conscious, and maintained through the kinds of interactions that sustain awareness of common purposes as well as respect for the integrity of differences.

This self-study emphasizes the concern for conscious and meaningful self and collective reflection in acts of curriculum making. What educators learn from self-study about themselves and from each other will benefit prospective teachers, parents and children, and will contribute to the development of global perspectives and the renewal of a spirit of community.

*K. De Lawter*

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION  
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Prints of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

SP039243

# **A SELF-STUDY IN TEACHER EDUCATION: COLLECTIVE REFLECTION AS NEGOTIATED MEANING**

Kathryn De Lawter & Adrienne "Andi" Sosin

Pace University, New York

This self-study of collaboration is one layer of a multi-layered research methodology, developed in collegial partnership to inquire into graduate pre-service teacher education students' understandings of multicultural education. The evolving collaborative relationship is viewed within the larger research study of their praxis in teaching. This paper focuses on the two teacher/researchers' experience of negotiating meaning in a process called collective reflection. The concept of collective reflection extends to the interpretive work of the students and teacher within the classroom. This self-study emphasizes the concern for conscious and meaningful reflection in acts of curriculum making.

Although the proposal for this paper was titled, "The Global Perspectives Calendar: A multi-layered qualitative methodology for the study of pre-service teacher education students' understandings of multicultural curriculum," the proposal reviews suggested that the authors elaborate on their work as a self-study. With this request, the reviews became a part of the inquiry methodology (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Feldman, 1999). This paper was written to make self-study focal and the title of the paper was changed.

## ***Roots of this self-study in a graduate teacher education core course***

The context of this collaboration is the teaching of "Global Perspectives," a graduate pre-service teacher education course at Pace University in New York City. The Global Perspectives course enables students who are career changers (Bennett, 1991; Evans et al., 1997; Guyton, 1993; Haberman, 1991) intent on making a difference (Greene, 1995; Lortie, 1975), to know what they bring, and develop an awareness of teaching praxis (Friere, 1970/1998). The Global Perspectives course attends closely to students' expressions and examinations of their personal knowledge (Polanyi, 1964). The course structure is designed to reflect ideas presented by Freire and Macedo (1987), who state that, "... it is through multiple discourses that students generate meaning in their everyday social context." Students are afforded opportunities for self-examination of their stereotypical presuppositions and biases (Trent, 1990). They draw

upon their multiple cultures and experiences by being paired as journal partners, and as "apprentice pairs" for the purpose of creating "global perspectives" K-12 classroom activities that examine stereotypes and world concerns (Gore, 1993; Saign, 1994; United Nations, 1989). Some students elect to engage in service learning with homeless children and youth through a community organization (Kroloff, 1993; Levinson, 1986; Rafferty, 1998; Schultz, 1987).

Throughout the course, meanings are socially constructed (Berger & Luckmann, 1967) around issues of culture, power and curriculum (Meier, 1995). It becomes clear to students that their social and cultural constructions are also political. This realization calls into question taken-for-granted realities (Garfinkel, 1967; Schutz, 1966) and bears on their openness to changing perspectives. Students' conceptual and value changes are legitimated through talk and interaction as a matter of consciousness (Weber, 1949). Disequilibrium (Piaget, 1971) is intended to transform the pedagogical relationship.

During the semester, as a major course project, each student struggles to create and present to the class an artifact, which is ambiguously defined, but must be recognizable as a multicultural "calendar", intended for actual future use in teaching. All course assignments are supported by texts and activities that assist students to become aware of multicultural approaches to teaching. (Ayers & Ford, 1996; Banks, 1991; Banks & Banks, 1996; Sleeter & Grant, 1994). Calendars, as expressions of the situated discourse (Gee, 1996) of the members of the class, become the focus of students' critical attention. The class' discourse about each calendar involves holistic assessment (DeFina, Anstendig, and De Lawter, 1991). Students discuss each other's work. The following criteria were developed with students: Unique/Original, Personal Connectedness, Eye Catching/Surprising, Cross-Cultural, Interactive, Educative/Usefulness, Relatable to subject matter, Relatable to viewer (De Lawter, 1990). This experiential process provides demanding authentic assessment opportunities for all class participants.

The calendar project poses a problematic curriculum task, which stimulates and challenges the pre-service teacher education students to think in new ways that call for a personal/social process of engagement, an openness to the experience of constructive criticism, and a willingness to persist. Students are concerned enough about their course grade to complete the calendar project, even if starting is difficult and many false starts are made. Students recognize each other's achievements as they respectfully encounter each other's artifacts and listen to the maker's description of process. The students' increased awareness of the meaningfulness of the criteria as they relate to diversity and culturally responsive teaching practices (Hollins, 1995; Leck, 1990; Nel, 1995), makes the thought of entering their own classrooms conceivable. Many students feel an emerging sense of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986) as prospective teachers. The Multicultural Calendar project is often highlighted in course evaluations as the student's most significant accomplishment in the teacher education program.

*A multi-layered qualitative research methodology as a work-in-progress*

This multi-layered qualitative research and its methodology are works-in-progress. It develops language for observation, analysis, and modification of the teacher/researchers' teaching practices. It is concerned with students' constructions of meaning, which reveal their issues, questions and problems in curriculum-making. To date, themes have been generated in three areas: 1) Multicultural Calendar Artifacts as Texts, 2) Collective Reflection, and 3) Praxis in Teaching. This paper about collaborative self-study is one layer of the larger action research study (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Goetz & LeCompte, 1984; Hutchinson, 1988; Merriam, 1988; Noffke, 1997; Oja & Smulyan, 1989; Sosin & De Lawter, 1999; Stake, 1988; Wolcott, 1988; Yin, 1984). Not included in this paper are the investigations of the Global Perspectives Calendar as a methodology for enhancing multicultural teaching, how multicultural calendar artifacts can be interpreted as texts, and the process of collective reflection with and between students. Additionally, layers of the research which explore the aesthetics of ethnography for education and the process of critical collaborative action research in teacher education are not included in this paper. Also, an ongoing investigation of the characteristics and effects of ambiguity in curriculum making is not discussed here.

*Rationale for this self-study in teacher education*

Most teachers want to know if what they are doing works with their students. Teacher educators are no different. They use lecture/discussions, simulations, in-

class presentations, practicum, projects, tutoring experiences, fieldwork, service learning, student teaching, and mentored relationships in the hope that their students will be prepared to teach (Kolb, 1984). In formalizing this research, the two teacher educators opened an inquiry into their actual practices of multicultural education, qualitative research, and collaborative partnership. Each of these areas is an experiential path of exploration of the complex social reality called teacher education.

This self-study layer extends the inquiry by making focal (Polanyi, 1967) the process of the collaborative partnership. It displays how meanings of multicultural education are interpreted, negotiated and articulated in the context of teacher education. The two teacher educators are transformed as researchers deliberately pursuing and making public their knowledge of their interpretive work (Garfinkel, 1967). Each reveals that self-reflection and collective reflection shape their interpretations of what is meaningful to them, their students, and their profession.

*Roots of this self-study in a teaching collaboration*

Self-reflection on teaching was already a vital part of both instructors' practices. This cooperative effort, by juxtaposing two people's perspectives, changed the nature of the self-reflection. The decision to make self-study focal came about after cooperation in the planning for the teaching of the course "Global Perspectives". What began as an administrative (De Lawter, 1982) necessity of expanding the Global Perspectives course into two sections, developed into a long-term collaboration in teaching and research.

At first the two instructors sat down to discuss the syllabus, the purposes of the course, particular assignments and activities, and assessment, in terms of holistic criteria and an interpretive scoring process. From the start, their process of communicating was of focal interest. They were tacitly aware of their cultural identities and somewhat familiar with the other's cultural background. There was an immediate recognition of different personal styles, theoretical paradigms, and professional uses of language. The circumstances were ripe for "crossing the divides." Cooperation expanded to collaboration through speaking to "the other" across boundaries of established differences. The seeds of this formal self-study were sown upon realizing a common purpose of developing education students' global perspectives. The instructors recognized a shared commitment to continuity of the original course design, and their genuinely warmhearted respect and collegiality that expressed a desire to learn and grow with each other.

The collaboration rapidly built upon the common purpose of investigating the students' construction of meaning. The recognition of differences between the teacher/researchers led to their realization that a meaningful inquiry into issues of multicultural education and teacher preparation included self-study. They found that their differences gave real impetus to the development of a multi-layered research methodology. These differences underscored the importance of understanding correspondences of meanings, as well as alternative interpretations in data analysis. With the need to articulate and clarify understandings of the data and use of key concepts for interpreting the data, conversations across theoretical paradigms became heuristic.

#### *Self-study as a research methodology in teacher education*

Relentless critiques of education and teacher education have resulted in legislative mandates for higher standards at all levels of education. These mandates create a situation of heightened concern among teachers as to how they can do their primary work of meeting the needs of their students, build community with parents, and exercise their professional judgments. Increasingly, curriculum and teaching have become prescriptive in nature and teachers' critical questioning has become risky and unwelcome. Teachers and teacher educators ponder how the new regulations and requirements can enable them to make a positive difference in a system of education which silences parents, and mutes the voices of teachers who know the children up close in the classroom.

As a way of coming to terms with the criticism, legislative mandates, and their own professional concerns for improving education, particularly pre-service teacher education, teacher educators have recently become involved in their own self-studies. In discussing the "New Scholarship in Teacher Education," Zeichner (1999) traces the historical background of research in teacher education. He recognizes that the importance of the self-study movement in teacher education is that the teacher educators themselves are conducting the research about teacher education. "The birth of the self-study in teacher education movement around 1990 has been probably the single most significant development ever in the field of teacher education research." (1999, p. 8).

Zeichner's review makes the self-study movement a category of the new scholarship in teacher education. He includes in this category of research various types of qualitative studies. Many deal with substantive issues relating to the lives and work of teacher educators such as analyses of their instructional

strategies and approaches, their struggles with issues of race, class and gender, and the contradictions they face in balancing their philosophical positions with the realities of their teaching practices and lives within institutions of higher education. Zeichner, by summarizing the importance of teacher education self-study research, however, directs attention to its value beyond the empowerment of teacher educators' reflective activity. He notes that self-study provides information about the personal and social complexities of educating teachers for membership in the educational and research communities. He also considers of major importance, self-study in teacher education that models and encourages disciplined and systematic inquiry for students, the prospective teachers.

For Schön (1983), self-study research methodologies first and foremost support practitioners' examination of their own practices. Thus, the purposeful, systematic self-reflection of teacher educators exemplifies Schön's "reflective practitioner." Other self-study methodologies such as dialogic communication through letters (Abt-Perkins, Hauschildt & Dale, 1998), conversation (Feldman, 1999), and in inquiry communities (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999) open possibilities for understanding meanings necessary to inform teaching and curricular decisions. The notion of praxis in teaching is concerned with the relationship between action and reflection. Teaching praxis hones an awareness of listening as vital to the interpretation of students' constructions of meaning. In this self-study, the teacher/researchers are inquiring into their reflections on their process of negotiating meanings concerning pre-service teacher's interpretations of multicultural education.

#### *The larger research project*

The multi-layered, longitudinal, incremental methodology of this research is an approach that makes explicit how integral researchers' paradigms and language are to the problems they define and the interpretations they make. This self-study is part of a growing body of work on important issues of theoretical and practical import in the lives of practicing teacher educators. The teacher/researchers peel away research layers to reveal facets of the interpretive process of their collaboration. The instructors, in alternate semesters, plan and conduct the course, engage with the artifacts as texts, and participate in holistic evaluation with the class. Purposeful selection of course resources, design of course requirements including rules for participation and evaluation in the course, and structuring of in-class activities and interactive discussions are part of the qualitative research design. Multiple action research cycles incorporate participant observation, conversations,

interviews, use of holistic rating criteria, and analytic reviews of video and audio tape, with reflection upon the characteristics of physical artifacts and documents (Turner, 1974). Each instructor reflects about the holistic evaluation experience after the event, and views videos of calendar presentations, before conducting constructive dialogue and reflection in collaboration.

#### *The significance of this self-study layer*

The significance of this layer of self-study is in its focus upon the communication and partnership between the teacher/researchers. The primary focus of the overall research is the students' constructions of meaning, i.e., students' active interpretive work of multicultural curriculum making. The teacher/researchers are interested in how their interpretations of students' work are understood, in language developed through their collaborative work. Generative themes (Friere, 1970/1998) have emerged from conversation. These will be discussed in another paper.

This paper is an account of how the teacher/researchers' interactions and interpretations actively shape their understandings of each other's and the students' interpretive work. It points to how consciousness of language in communication is the basis for eliciting generative themes. It reveals the presuppositions underlying how their interpretations of students' meanings are a result of their interpretive work together. The paradigms of critical theory, constructivism, and the sociology of knowledge have guided the collaborative process of negotiating meanings. The teacher/researchers' distinct paradigms have been made focal and problematic through intentional conversations. By engaging in this self-study, the teacher/researchers' understandings have become data as a layer of the research. Each now views their interpretive work as a form of "collective reflection".

#### *Collective Reflection*

The term "collective reflection" emerged as the two teacher/researchers engaged in focused dialogues. The term refers to self-conscious engagement with "the other" for the purpose of mutual understanding whether in the classroom or with a research partner. It refers to the talk and interaction between people who view being together as time to learn with and from each other. The concept of "Collective Reflection" extends the notion of "Meaning Construction" (De Lawter, 1982).

De Lawter identifies "Meaning Construction" as a relational construct, first between persons (in a social context) and secondly, between readers and texts (within

a social context) (Ricoeur, 1976) as well as between readers and other readers.

"Meaning Construction [is] a kind of discourse which can occur in the classroom but usually does not, because of the prevailing classroom meaning structures. The construction of meaning is the interpersonal work of interpreting human action on the world resulting in stories, artifacts, and knowledge of all kinds: [it is] the integration and appropriation of the social construction of knowledge, fact, and meaning into one's own matrix of meaning; the act of interpreting experience and reflection upon one's own and others' meaning constructions. Meaning Construction in the interpersonal situation is both an action on the world to make sense, and a reflection upon that action to understand why this [sense] rather than another sense [was made]. (De Lawter, 1982)

According to De Lawter, the classroom is a particular social context with four "classroom meaning structures," which she calls the pedagogical, the curricular, the administrative and the evaluative. Within these overlapping meaning structures are four kinds of discourse that occur in classrooms: Everyday Chit-Chat, Commonsense Knowledge, Curriculum Knowledge, and Meaning Construction. The notion of "collective reflection" emphasizes the social nature of Meaning Construction, and affirms the authentic expression of "personal knowledge" (Polanyi, 1964), understood to mean that process of knowing by which human beings relate their objectivity and subjectivity as universal meanings individually integrated within themselves. The teacher/researchers' agreed upon definition of collective reflection carries the sense of openness, and a willingness to change one's view or position through dialogue. It is an encounter with another's ideas, where the act of active listening is an engagement with the personal knowledge of "the other" to construct meaning. In the context of the Global Perspectives course, collective reflection is a fundamental condition that must be created, made conscious, and maintained through the kinds of interactions that sustain awareness of common purposes as well as respect for the integrity of differences whatever they may be.

Collective reflection speaks to the quality of the relationships between people doing interpretive work

together. The key word is "together" since a commitment to the mutual construction of meaning calls for authentic speech and action. Herein lies the possibility of understanding. Moments for breakthroughs come up. As partners, the teacher educators recognize how challenging it is to work towards breakthroughs in both teaching and research. Time is not taken-for-granted, since the teacher/researchers value the time it takes to explore ideas as far as possible. In moments when ideas come to the fore, the multi-layered research methodology encourages respectful pursuit of the inquiry. Both partners fully engage in active listening to the personal knowledge of "the other" to construct meaning. This is the interpretive work, whether negotiating meaning as an experience of collaboration or as praxis in teaching with a class. A common language develops that is grounded in trust, and in a relationship of growth (Gadamer, 1992).

#### *Collective Reflection as Negotiated Meanings*

From the beginning, common understandings were a result of negotiated agreements. The self-reflective practices of the two teacher educators, rather than remaining tacit, (Polanyi, 1967) had become focal in their first meeting to discuss the Global Perspectives course. At first, the purpose was cooperation in bringing in a new instructor on the planning and writing of the syllabus. However, stimulated by the exchange, a decision was made to collaborate that led to their connecting with "the other." Reaching across boundaries for understanding, their teaching praxis moved the two teacher educators to come together as teacher/researchers in action research.

Fortunately, collaborative practices provide opportunities for self-study. This self-study incorporates conversation, live and recorded, self-reflection, the viewing of videos, proposal and paper writing, and conference preparations and debriefings. Conversation in collective reflection is a dialogical inquiry involving critique. Some conversations are audio taped and then revisited as a new exchange. The negotiated meanings of conversation recognize the paradigmatic space and uses of language. These create conversational openings that are the opposite of time fillers. These conversations in teacher education stimulate professional and personal growth. They spark the imagination and inspire preparations for classroom interactions.

Negotiating meanings is also about self-reflection. The self-reflections of this self-study raise such questions as, "What am I doing and Why am I doing it?" and "Why am I doing it this way?" (Cruikshank, 1996). In addition, viewing videos both individually and together and, note taking and responding are both events of self and collective reflection. The more formal work of

collective reflection includes proposal writing and paper writing. Negotiations of meaning in writing extend the interpretive possibilities for understanding and growth. Conference preparations also provide incentive to be precise in making public the formulations based on experience, realization and discovery.

The negotiated meanings of collective reflection enable self-understanding. In the teacher/researcher partnership thus far, respect for self is manifested by addressing the questions, "Who am I as a human being?" and "How do I see myself, yesterday, today, and tomorrow? In other words, "What do I know of my autobiographical story?" As teacher/research partners, respect for "the other" takes multiple forms, including 1) critical questioning of the language and paradigms brought to the understanding of others' interpretations, 2) focusing on the process of research collaboration, 3) connecting collaboration with the making of community, 4) identifying individual and collaborative curricular decisions and assessment practices, and, 5) negotiating the tension between categorization and deconstruction in the interpretation of meaning.

#### *An example of negotiated meanings in collective reflection*

The two teacher/researchers' different ways of writing and speaking elicit different meanings. Participants doing collective reflection gain or are enriched, by examining the other's ways of communicating meaning. In writing this paper, there were, both instances when one author was convinced to go with the other's way of drawing the meaning, and, times when agreements were made to combine or shape an alternative version. As an example, the following section contains statements offered by one of the teacher/researchers to initiate further conversation about how collective reflection as negotiated meanings is understood. In the subsequent paragraph are "the other" teacher/researcher's written statements on collective reflection as negotiated meaning. What do the statements reveal about a correspondence between the two teacher/researchers' meanings?

#### Initiating comments on collective reflection as negotiated meanings:

(KD): First, respect is an ever-amazing lubricant that increases idea and generative theme flow. Second, self-conscious conversation creates opportunities for the acknowledgement of genuine differences that can profoundly alter the taken-for-granted grounding of closely held positions. Third, the trusting relationship deepens



with each encounter. Personal perspectives are valued as traditions of meaning connected with others in time and place. These traditions can be understood, questioned, and allowed to inform other ways of thinking. Fourth, each person's relationship to knowledge is potentially identified, but not reified as "given" or "fixed" or "natural". Fifth, a constructivist view of knowing is affirmed, yet differently considered as exploratory and experimental by the two teacher/researchers committed to experiential education.

"The other" teacher/researcher's comments:

(AS): Collective reflection, when considered by an individual used to making bulleted lists, becomes a listing of its attributes. The ideas inherent in the consideration of collective reflection as a negotiation of meaning are 1) that the terminology or language that is used is defined within the process of collective reflection. 2) One engaged in the process gives and takes as ideas are discussed, sharing one's conceptions of meaning while being open to conflicts or differences. 3) The end product of collective reflection can be a meeting of the minds, although it is possible that the participants agree to disagree. 4) The experience of collective reflection provides for growth in understanding for all participants to the process.

Below, in the next section are the two teacher/researchers' written responses to their comments above, which provide a sample of written self-reflections. Each agreed to spontaneously write statements about collective reflection. After reading each other's statements, they agreed that before discussing them, they would write a response. In writing what they thought and felt, they displayed their personal knowledge. This example is an expression of the self-reflection that provides a basis for their collective reflection.

The self-reflective responses to the paragraphs on collective reflection as negotiated meaning:

(AS): In looking at our two different statements, I am impressed by how much alike they are. We espouse a similar reason for engaging in

collective reflection, that of some type of learning, be it a "constructivist view of knowing," or "growth in understanding." Yet we are different in our emphases. In my definition of collective reflection, I brought a dispassionate detachment. I saw the listing of attributes and the abstraction of the process. My partner's first paragraph is a statement that embodies her feelings - her statement has greater intensity and more personal connectedness than does mine. She discusses the self-consciousness of conversation, and the respect between participants as important factors. The personal and trusting relationships in which the interaction of each participant's traditions of meaning play a role is vital to her conception of the process.

The act and process of collective reflection are embodied in both these statements - by seeking similarities and isolating differences, we negotiate meaning. We each attempt to use language to persuade each other of the rightness of our personal points of view. I am often persuaded to modify my position, and sometimes abandon my own conception and adopt my counterpart's. In all instances, we negotiate until we either compromise or arrive at impasse. Like collective bargaining, this is a derivative of long history - we are resolving meanings, gaining in understanding, and developing a deep and truthful relationship.

(KD): I was struck by how much in agreement and in common "the other's" statements were and yet the statements were very different from each other. One writer seemed to emphasize the personal dimensions of the collaboration, displaying personal connectedness. "The other" focused strongly on the significance of process. I found myself recognizing her statements as "key" points in the way I do when my students express themselves in writing. I also wondered why I had not made these statements



since I saw them as vital to the understanding of collective reflection as negotiated meaning. My meaning construction process then alternated between focally noting how I had arrived at my overview of the personal/process difference and tacitly keeping the notion of collective reflection as negotiated meaning as the central relationship between the two paragraphs. I noted in the margins the concepts in each statement that provided the basis for my recognition of the personal/process point of view. In the first paragraph, statement one, the personal was expressed in terms of respect. In statement two, was the concept of self (consciousness). Statement three held the concepts of trust, relationship, encounter, and personal. Statement four had the concepts of person and relationship, and statement five carried the concept of commitment. These concepts provided the underpinnings of what I seemed to be pointing to, i.e. a personal dimension of collective reflection as negotiated meaning.

I saw in paragraph two the actual word "process" three times. In statement one the reader will find, "defined within the process," in statement two, "engaged in the process," and in statement four, "participants to the process." Statement three, appeared to me to be stating a result of the "process" of collective reflection as negotiated meaning. My process then became one of looking for the similarities in meaning between the two writers. I began seeing in the first paragraph a series of triple relationships: in statement one, between respect, idea/generative theme, and flow; in statement two, between self-conscious (conversation), acknowledgement (differences), and alter (taken-for-granted); in statement three, between trusting (relationship), valued (traditions of meaning), and connected (with others); in statement four, between person, relationship, and knowledge; and in statement five, I saw the triple relationship between

affirmed, differently considered, and committed.

In the second paragraph, I saw in statement one, a focus on language (defined); in statement two, give and take, sharing (conceptions), and being open (to conflict/differences); in statement three, "a meeting of the minds," and the possibility of agreeing to disagree; and in statement four, I saw the concepts of experience, growth, and understanding. I was surprised to note that my partner had mentioned "understanding" while I had not, and that I had mentioned knowledge and she had not. I had spoken of traditions of meaning and she had spoken of conceptions of meaning. She spoke of experience and I spoke of experiential (education). I spoke of persons, she of participants. Both of us communicated our senses of the importance of what is held in common after noting probable dissonances or differences. I wondered how she would respond to what I had written. I was energized by the prospect of hearing what she would say about the relationship between the two paragraphs. Will she express interest in the distinctions I had drawn of the problem of reification of knowledge? Will she make a connection with students' constructions of their multicultural calendar artifacts and my statement number four about person's relationships to knowledge? I will tell her how her statements express what I take to be vital about collective reflection as negotiated meaning. I am eager to know how my statements will speak to her. My experience of the use of the term collective reflection is that it is an invitation to join with others in the quest for greater precision in meaning making.

#### *Collective reflection's potential for creating new language*

Collective reflection holds the potential to create a new language for speaking about new and shared understandings grounded in experience. It has a quality that warrants communicating more about, a quality of being consciously open to difference and other-ness.

Collective reflection is radical in the sense of getting to the roots. Collective reflection taps a person's being, moves the person to see anew, and connects the person for choosing acts of personal/social power. Collective reflection generates shared understandings called relational knowledge (Hollingsworth, cited in Feldman, 1999) tied to political and social structures. Friere's (1985; 1970/1998) work demonstrates how educators create a new language with which to talk about education. Ways of speaking with each other are social agreements. (Berger and Luckmann, 1967). Real talk, active listening and purposeful action are expressions of power (Friere, 1970/1998). Collective reflection is an instance (Garfinkel, 1967) of experiential learning that envisions freedom, democracy, and social justice as societal possibilities and personal/social actions.

Students and teachers potentially express their meanings through multiple ways of knowing in the schooling process. Polanyi's (1964) notion of "personal knowledge" affirms the connectedness and power of persons who express universal meanings that transcend their own subjectivity. Personal knowledge and meaning are understandable as a manifestation of the social relationships that occur between knowing beings in a time and place. The new language created in the process of collective reflection issues forth from being human in the act of negotiating meaning. Collective reflection opens possibilities for empowered persons to change things (and themselves in the process).

Meaning construction practices, actualize and affirm the communicative competence (Habermas, 1976) each brings to "the other." As teacher/researchers engaged in collective reflection, the work is to make sense of the ongoing collaboration. Empowered action, growth in understanding, and reflection on that action and growth over time constitute a fruitful praxis. Further, this experiential work contributes to a fertile grounding for their students' growth and awareness of praxis in teaching.

#### *Collective Reflection as Praxis in Teaching*

Collective reflection as praxis in teaching refers to the action and reflection a teacher does with and for students. Teaching praxis is the dialectic between the actions and language of the students and teacher (Friere, 1970/1998). Teachers notice students' uses of language in the classroom and their own responses to them. Teachers also make statements and ask questions that both prompt and give messages to individuals and groups for in-class activities and outside of class assignments. Teachers' and others' statements and questions shape participants' interactions as members of the class.

Praxis in teaching has to do with modeling the integrated dialectic of theory-in-practice. Both educators are mindful of the obligation to make explicit why they do what they do. Concerned that education courses and methods courses in particular are challenged to both model and teach praxis, each strives to model teaching praxis as an experiential art. Both create opportunities for action and reflection by envisioning and organizing events throughout the teacher education curriculum. While Global Perspectives is only one course, it is a core course in the graduate teacher education curriculum. It is a course that fosters students' experimentation with curricular and pedagogical practices. Students create activities and reflect on their own and other's actions and reflections.

Praxis in teaching includes course preparation based on decisions made about interpretations of students' work. Interpersonal communications as well as the artifacts made by students are vital to understanding what and how the students know. The formats of the assignments for students' interpretive work are designed for inclusive engagement. Classmates are assigned journal partners. Every week journal partners exchange their ideas in writing and in conversation on matters relevant to the course. Every student is also apprenticed to another class member. "Apprentice pairs" explore curriculum making in collaboration. Paired heterogeneously, though sometimes by subject matter or grade level, students create global perspectives activities, deciding together how to integrate world concerns into the curriculum or how to engage their peers in an activity for examining cultural stereotypes. They experience envisioning curriculum and implementing a teaching plan. A service learning option is also offered to students who want to work directly with homeless children in the neighborhood. Through these formats, students in the global perspectives course actualize opportunities for collective reflection. What matters are the students' constructions of meaning.

Since no praxis of any two instructors is the same, there is all the more reason for conversation. A common frame of reference develops between parties to the conversation. Valuing students as informants of teachers alters teacher/researcher reflection. Negotiated meanings evolve into common understandings of the terms they agree to use. This self-study begins an account of the work-in-progress. The trust elicited through the conversations about the course is now a ready referent for the two teacher/researchers. Their growing relationship is greatly valued and serves as a model of the kind of care and openness to "the other" that is so important for students interested in changing their perspectives and developing a global perspective. It is through collective

reflection that the focus on praxis in teaching reveals the essential commitments of the two teacher/researchers as educators.

### *Conclusion*

This self-study is an invigorating undertaking. It provides TIME for two colleagues with different backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives TO BE together. Taking their different perspectives on curricular issues and problems and sharing their common teaching concerns they gladly delve into their own teaching and research practices with trust and challenge. In the academy, mutual support is warranted and necessary. At this turn of the century, the education of teachers is at a critical moment. The encouragement of meaningful undertakings such as self-studies could not come at a more opportune time for educators and teachers at all levels. What they can learn about themselves and from each other within their own meaning context will benefit children, other teachers, students, and parents, and will contribute to the renewal of a spirit of community. Teachers framing their own questions will regain their voice. Such empowerment is the essence of education and can transform classrooms into domains of democracy.

## References

- Abt-Perkins, Dawn, Hauschildt, Patricia, & Dale, Helen. Critical Pedagogy in Process: A Collaborative Self-Study. *Teaching Education*. 1998, Winter/Spring, Vol. 9 No. 2, pp101-107.
- Ayers, W. & Ford, P. (Eds.). (1996). *City kids, city teachers: Reports from the front row*. New York: New Press.
- Bandura, A. (1986). *Social foundations of thought and action: A social cognitive theory*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Banks, J.A. (1991). *Teaching strategies for ethnic studies*. (5th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Banks, J.A. & Banks, C.M. (1996). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives*. (2nd ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.
- Bennett, C. (1991). The teacher as decision maker program: An alternative for career-change preservice teachers. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 42(2), 119-130.
- Berger, P. & Luckmann, T. (1967). *The social construction of reality: A treatise in the sociology of knowledge*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Books, Doubleday.
- Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. (1999). Relationships of knowledge and practice: Teacher learning in communities. In A. Iran-Nejad & P.D. Pearson (Eds.). *Review of research in education*, 24. Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.
- Carr, W. & Kemmis, S. (1986). *Becoming critical: Education, knowledge and action research*. London: Falmer Press.
- Cruickshank, D.R. (1996). *Preparing America's Teachers*. Bloomington, IN: Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation.
- De Lawter, K. (1982). *A constructivist's view of competency-based teacher education materials*. Unpublished dissertation. Teachers College, Columbia University.
- De Lawter, K. (1990). Global perspectives calendar holistic evaluation criteria. Unpublished manuscript. Pace University.
- DeFina, A.A., Anstendig, L. & De Lawter, K. (1991). "Alternative reading/writing assessment and curriculum design." *Journal of Reading*, 34(5).
- Evans, E.D., Torrey, C.C., & Newton, S.D. (1997). Multicultural education requirements in teacher certification: A national survey. *Multicultural Education*, Spring, 1997, 9-11.
- Feldman, A. (1999). The role of conversation in collaborative action research. *Educational Action Research: An International Journal*, 7, 125-144.
- Freire, P. (1970/1998). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1985). *The politics of education: Culture, power and liberation*. South Hadley, MA: Bergin & Garvey.
- Freire, P. and Macedo, D. (1987). *Literacy: Reading the word and the world*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Gadamer, H. (1992). *Truth and method*, 2<sup>nd</sup> revised edn (J. Weinsheimer & D. G. Marshall, Trans.). New York: Crossroad.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967). *Studies in ethnomethodology*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Gee, J.P. (1996). *Social linguistics and literacies: Ideology in discourse*. (2nd ed.) Bristol, PA: Taylor & Francis.
- Goetz, J.P. & LeCompte, M.D. (1984). *Ethnography and qualitative design in educational research*. New York: Academic Press.
- Gore, A. (1993). *Earth in the balance: Ecology and the human spirit*. New York: Plume Book.
- Greene, M. (1995). *Releasing the imagination: Essays on education, the arts, and social change*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Guyton, E. and others (1993). A collaborative field-based urban teacher education program. *Action in Teacher Education*, 15(3), 7-11.
- Haberman, M. (1991). Can cultural awareness be taught in teacher education programs? *Teaching Education*, 4 (1), 25-31.

- Habermas, Y. (1976). What is universal pragmatics? In M. Cooke (Ed.) On the pragmatics of communication. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Hollins, E. (1995). Revealing the deep meaning of culture in school learning: Framing a new paradigm for teacher preparation. Action in Teacher Education, 17 (1), 70-79.
- Hutchinson, S. (1988). Education and grounded theory. In R.R. Sherman & R.B. Webb (Eds.), Qualitative research in education: Focus and methods (pp.123-140). New York: Falmer Press.
- Kolb, D.A. (1984). Experiential Learning: Experience as the source of learning and development. Englewood Cliffs NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Kroloff, Rabbi C.A. (1993). 54 Ways you can help the homeless. Southport, CT: Macmillan Publishing
- Leck, G.M. (1990). Examining gender as a foundation within foundational studies. Teachers College Record, 91 (3), 382-395.
- Levinson, L. (1986). "Choose Engagement Over Exposure." in J. Kendall et al. Combining service and learning. (pp 68-75). National Society for Experiential Education.
- Lortie, D. (1975). Schoolteacher: A sociological study. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Meier, D. (1995). The power of their ideas: Lessons for America from a small school in Harlem. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Merriam, S.B. (1988). Case study research in education: A qualitative approach. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Nel, J. (1995). From theory to practice: Ogbu and Erickson in the multicultural curriculum. Action in Teacher Education, 17 (1), 60-69.
- Noffke, S. (1997). Professional, personal, and political dimensions of action research. Review of Educational Research, 22, 305-343.
- Oja, S. N., & Smulyan, L. (1989). Collaborative action research: A developmental process. New York: Falmer Press.
- Piaget, J. (1971). Psychology and epistemology. Middlesex, England: Penguin Books.
- Polanyi, M. (1964). Personal knowledge: Towards a post-critical philosophy. New York: Harper & Row.
- Polanyi, M. (1967). The tacit dimension. New York: Doubleday.
- Ricoeur, P. (1976). Interpretation theory: discourse and the surplus of meaning. Fort Worth, TX: The Texas Christian University Press.
- Rafferty, Y. (1998). Meeting the educational needs of homeless children. Educational Leadership, 55, (4), 48-52.
- Saign, G.C. (1994). GREEN essentials: What you need to know about the environment. San Francisco: Mercury House.
- Schön, D. (1983). The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action. New York: Basic Books.
- Schultz, S. (1987). "Learning by Heart: The Role of Action in Civic Education." in J. Kendall et al. Combining service and learning. (pp 210-224). National Society for Experiential Education.
- Schutz, A. (1962). Collected papers: Studies in phenomenological philosophy. In Maurice Natanson, (Ed.) Collected papers: Studies in phenomenological philosophy. Volume I. The Hague: Martinus Nijoff.
- Slecter, C.E. & Grant, C.A. (1994). Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class and gender. (2nd ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Sosin, A. & De Lawter, K. (1999). A Collaborative Action Research Investigation in Teacher Education: The Global Perspectives Calendar as a methodology for enhancing multicultural Teaching. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association. Montreal, April 22, 1999. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 430 926).
- Stake, R.E. (1988). Case study methods in educational research. In R. M. Jaeger, (Ed.), Complementary methods for research in education. (pp. 253-265). Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.
- Trent, W. (1990). Race and ethnicity in the teacher education curriculum. Teachers College Record, 91 (3), 361-369.

- Turner, R. (Ed.) (1974). Ethnomethodology: Selected readings. Middlesex, England: Penguin.
- United Nations. (1989). Teaching human rights: Practical activities for primary and secondary schools. Geneva: Centre for Human Rights.
- Weber, M. (1949) The methodology of the social sciences (E.A. Shils & H.A. Finch. Eds. & Trans.). New York: Free Press.
- Wolcott, H. F. (1988). Ethnographic research in education. In R. M. Jaeger, (Ed.). Complementary methods for research in education. (pp. 187-221). Washington, D.C.: American Educational Research Association.
- Yin, R.K. (1984) Case study research: Design and methods. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications.
- Zeichner, K. (1999). The new scholarship in teacher education. Educational Researcher, 22(9), 4-15.